

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: February 10, 2017

Agenda Item: Waters Approved for Commercial Bait Seining Annual Rule

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 Min

Background

A bait fish seining license is required for: 1) persons 15 years of age and older to seine for and transport bait fish for commercial purposes in Montana; and 2) for any person who seines for and has in their possession more than 24 dozen non-game bait fish. The Commission may designate waters that are allowed for these purposes, and FWP describes these waters annually in the Commercial Bait Seining Application form. In summer 2016, dreissenid mussel larva were discovered in Tiber Reservoir. To prevent their spread, all transport of water and live animals away from Tiber Reservoir and the Marias River drainage must be stopped. For this reason, bait collection in Tiber Reservoir and the Marias drainage will be removed from the list.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Because this is an emergency, the Department requests that the Commission take public comment at the February Commission meeting and based on that input, make a final decision immediately, so the new rule can go into effect.

Alternatives and Analysis.

The only way that collection of bait from these waters would not come with a risk of moving the mussels is if the bait collector was to use well water to transport fish. Such a requirement would require a change to ARM rules, which is a 6-month process and will not respond to this crisis soon enough.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

The risk of transmission of dreissenid mussels from the Marias River drainage justifies the cessation of commercial collections there. Other waters are still available for commercial collections in the vicinity, such as the Missouri River below Morony Dam.

Proposed Motion

I propose to approve these waters for removal from the list of lakes authorized for collection by bait fish seining license holders.